

Why do cyclists run red lights?

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Almost 40 per cent of cyclists have reported committing red light infringements, but fines should only be part of the strategy to improve safety, according to new research.

Published in [Accident Analysis and Prevention](#), a study by Monash University researchers Drs Marilyn Johnson, Judith Charlton, Stuart Newstead and Jennie Oxley, examined why Australian cyclists run red lights and the characteristics of those who do.

The researchers, from the Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC) surveyed more than 2000 cyclists and found that the most common reasons cited for riding through red lights could be at least partially mitigated by more inclusive [road infrastructure](#), amendments to road rules and targeted education programs.

Almost one third of respondents who had run a red light did so during a left hand turn. The next most common reason, cited by 24.2 per cent of infringers, was that they were unable to activate the sensors in the road, known as inductive detector loops, to trigger a traffic light change. Just over 16 per cent of cyclists reported a red light infringement when no other traffic - vehicular or pedestrian - was present.

Dr. Johnson said the study results implied that many cyclists felt it was safe to turn left against a red light.

"The most obvious safety benefit for cyclists if they turn left during the red light phase is that they then don't have to negotiate the corner with the vehicles," Dr. Johnson said.

"A well-planned trial with adequate signage would be a good first step to see if permitting cyclists to turn left on red at some intersections would improve cyclists' safety."

Dr. Johnson said infrastructure adjustments could help resolve the problem of detector loops not being triggered by bikes and leaving cyclists stranded during low-traffic periods.

"Cyclists across Australia were frustrated by their inability to change traffic lights," Dr. Johnson said.

"At some sites, cyclists can activate the signal change if they ride over the right spot. Painting that spot with a bike symbol may be an easy and very cheap solution. At other sites, we need to reconsider how these detector loops are calibrated to ensure all roads users can activate the signal change."

Results showed that overall, men were more likely to infringe than women, as were people aged 18 to 29, compared to those in older age

brackets. Cyclists who had been fined for a [red light](#) infringement while driving were 50 per cent more likely to have infringed while riding a bike.

"Fines continue to have a place in enforcing road rules for cyclists, but these will be more effective when combined with measures to make the roads a more inclusive place for [cyclists](#)," Dr. Johnson said.

Provided by Monash University

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